

Testimony before the Public Safety and Security Committee
In Support of HB 5278 Authorizing Firefighters To Conduct
Charitable Fund Raising Boot Drives on State Highways
February 7, 2013

Good morning ;

My name is Charles M. Stankye, Jr., a long time member of the Paugasset H & L Co. Of Derby.

Traditionally, firefighters, both volunteers and career, have held boot drives on the local roads throughout the State of Connecticut, unimpeded. The statutes were seldom enforced, if at all, This practice continues to this day.

The proceeds of these boot drives have benefitted numerous charitable and community causes throughout Connecticut.

For many years, my company has been holding a boot drive twice a year on Derby Ave., which runs in front of our fire house. This is a state owned road. Most of the local main roads in our cities and towns are owned by the state.

The drives are held on the Saturday before Memorial Day and on the Saturday after Thanksgiving . Weather permitting. We are on the road between 10 AM and 3 PM.

The safety of all participants is always in the forefront of our activities. Traffic cones are set up to maintain orderly lanes, signs and fire apparatus with flashing lights are set in place far ahead of the collection area and our personel are dressed in turn out gear with traffic vests on. The back up of traffic flow is also monitored and is opened up if it gets to congested.

Donations are usually a couple of dollar bills per vehicle or a hand full of change including some tokens. Occasionally we get a ten or twenty dollar bill. Once we received a store bought apple pie from a woman. And there are some who just drive by.

These boot drives benefit many charitable causes in our community and the surrounding areas. Among the benefactors are organized youth activities (Boy Scouts, Little League, Pop Warner, Biddy Basketball), scholarships for public and parochial schools in Derby, Bridgeport Burn Center and others.

We have purchased life saving and fire fighting equipment such as the first Thermal Imaging Camera in the Naugatuck Valley area. Five years ago, we saved money from several boot drives to purchase and equip an All Terrain Vehicle. This vehicle is very useful in accessing the Derby Greenway, which is a two mile long walking trail. The trail is not readily accesible for a full size motor vehicle to get to someone who is injured or suffers a medical seizure.

The vehicle is also utilized to get firefighters and equipment to brush fires in remote areas of Osbornedale State Park and Witek Park.

A few days before our Spring 2012 boot drive we were informed by the Derby Police Dept. That our permission was revoked because of a violation of state statutes pertaining to highways. To hold the drive, would subject us to arrest. We canceled further boot drives.

A fire company in neighboring Ansonia, has regularly held their boot drive on Division St., which is the border between Ansonia and Derby. The Derby Police instructed them to stay on the Ansonia side or face possible arrest. They had no problem with the Ansonia Police Dept.

Following the tragedy in Sandy Hook, firefighters throughout Connecticut held boot drives for the benefit of the Sandy Hook Fund. They didn't have any hinderance from any police. We would have been out there also, except for the Derby Police directive.

Our situation in Derby is an isolated incident. Boot drives continue to^{be} held in Connecticut, on state owned local roads. No one else seems to have the problem.

We would like to be able to conduct our boot drives on local roads within our cities and towns that are state owned. I emphasize the word LOCAL. We are NOT seeking to use multiple lane, limited access roads such as Rte 8 or Rte 25.

We ask your serious consideration and approval of this bill.

Thank you for listening to my presentation